

# Drink Driving Monitor

ETSC's Newsletter on Drink Driving Policy Developments in the EU

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## Editorial

### Last high drink driving limits to change in Europe

One of the last countries with a 0.8 BAC limit has finally fallen into line with the majority of the EU. Luxembourg lowered its limit to 0.5 BAC for the majority of drivers, and reduced the level even further to 0.2 BAC for novice and professional drivers. After many years of discussion the new law came into force on 1st October 2007. The new law also extends police powers to allow for the on-the-spot withdrawal of the driving licence for the most serious drink driving offences. Sanctions have been increased including both an increase in fines and withdrawal of points.

Experience has shown that a combination of measures must be taken to ensure success in reducing alcohol related deaths. A strong campaign and increased enforcement at the time of introduction are crucial elements next to any reduction in the legal BAC limit. Of course ETSC, alongside other road safety experts will be watching Luxembourg carefully to see the impact of the new legislation, but are hopeful.

Especially looking at other countries that have recently reduced their BAC limits. Cyprus lowered its BAC limit from 0.9 to 0.5 in 2006 and dramatically increased its checks. Switzerland reduced its BAC limit in 2005 and also introduced random breath testing. The combination contributed to the drop in road traffic deaths.

This only leaves two countries which still have 0.8 BAC limit: the UK and Ireland. In the UK a consultation is due in January 2008 on drink driving and this must consider the safety benefits of lowering the limit and increasing enforcement activities with for example targeted testing to areas and times where drink driving is known to be rife. Ireland introduced random breath testing in 2006 and increased sanctions dramatically earlier in 2007 but still has a 0.8 BAC limit. However in its Road Safety Strategy 2007-2012, the Irish Government committed to lowering the limit before 2009 and an expert group is currently working on deciding on what would be the right level for Ireland.

The time has come for the UK and Ireland to join the rest of Europe in reducing its BAC limit to 0.5 and making the most of this by increasing police enforcement and checks and organising a big campaign to raise the public's understanding that drinking and driving is never a good mix.

This current issue gives an overview of the latest developments in alcohol related road safety policies in the EU with a particular focus on Luxembourg and Ireland.

Jörg Beckmann  
ETSC Executive Director

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# EU and Country News

## EP report targets drink driving

In September, the European Parliament adopted an own initiative report on the EU's strategy to support Member States in reducing alcohol-related harm. The report raised several issues including reducing accidents caused by drinking and driving. It called on the Commission and Member States, with the involvement of the Health and Alcohol Forum, to encourage the exchange of proven best practices. In particular to promote a European level blood alcohol content (BAC) limit as close as 0.00 % for new drivers, as already proposed by the European Parliament in its resolution of 18 January 2007 on the European Road Safety Action Programme - mid-term review. The Report stressed the need to communicate to consumers that drinking and driving are not compatible and to take necessary measures to increase controls on drink-driving to the maximum. In particular MEPs endorsed the need for co-operation between national police forces on controls on drink-driving by young people. The Report also sought the strengthening of sanctions for drink-driving imposed by Member States, such as prolonged withdrawal of the driving licence. MEPs called for increase of alternative public transport for drivers who have consumed alcohol. Furthermore the Report highlighted the need to extend "designated-driver programmes" to all Member States.

## European anti-drink driving co-operation

TISPOL stepped up drink driving checks during its one week campaign in June this year. Figures from checks from across Europe showed that drink driving is now more common in summer than at Christmas. Police in 21 countries took part in an operation. The campaign saw 692,187 drivers checked for alcohol with 12,250 proving positive. The figures showed a large percentage increase compared with a similar week-long campaign held in the run-up to Christmas 2006. Responding to the results of the increased checks TISPOL's outgoing President Eddy Greif of Belgium said that the rise in the number being caught could be down to police being better able to spot drink drivers, but it could also suggest that drink driving is on the increase.

The Christmas Drink drive campaign of TISPOL will run during December 10th - 16th and TISPOL aims to check 800,000 drivers across Europe. The new president of TISPOL, Adam Briggs from the UK, is Deputy Chief Constable North Yorkshire Police and also holds the national responsibility under the UK Association of Chief Police Officers

(ACPO) for European Roads Policing. He has vowed to continue TISPOL's pattern of week-long concerted campaigns backed up by all year action but will be asking for increased emphasis on the education and safety of young people during his year in office.

## Tougher sanctions for offenders in Italy

In Italy a new traffic decree was agreed in August which has yet to be agreed by Senate. The aim of the new law is to reduce traffic deaths. Besides tightening the offences for speeding, tackling drink driving will also be affected. For those with a BAC limit of between 0.5-0.8 they face a fine of between 500-2000 EUR and up to one month in prison and a license withdrawal of between 3-6 months. Those with a BAC limit of between 0.8 and 1.5 they face a fine of between 800-3,200 EUR and up to three months in prison and license withdrawal of between 3-6 months. Those with a BAC limit of over 1.5 they face a fine of between 1,500 and 6000 EUR and up to six months in prison and license withdrawal of between 12-24 months. Sanctions under 1.5 BAC limit will double if the drink driver causes an accident. Bars and clubs will also be required to display posters on the dangers of drink driving. The money raised from the introduction of these new measures will be ploughed back into road safety work.

## Incentives for the young to stay sober

Another innovative approach of targeting young people in Italy was to run a campaign by sending text messages to young people (18-35 years) before the weekend of the football match Italy vs Scotland. If the police had stopped the driver during an alcohol check, and if the driver kept the text message ("Don't drink and drive") on his mobile phone, and was found to be sober during the control, then that person would be entitled to win tickets for major sports events such as football matches played by the national football team, F1 GP in Monza and Misano. The aim was to provide incentives for this target group not to drink and drive around sporting events.

## UK novice drivers come in the focus

In the UK a report on novice drivers was adopted this July by the House of Commons Transport Select Committee. It included two important recommendations on drink driving to the Home Office and the Department of Transport. Firstly, to introduce a zero BAC limit for novice drivers. In

its response given in October the government announced plans for consultations expected in January 2008 on Drink Driving and another one on Young Drivers scheduled for early 2008. Secondly, the Transport Select Committee report also called for introducing a ban for novice drivers from carrying young passengers late at night.

The government in its response stated that two forthcoming consultations would address the evidence and practicality in introducing both of these proposals. In the case of the transport of passengers by novice drivers they referred to the numbers of casualties resulting from reported personal injury road accidents between 11.00 pm -5 am involving 10-20 year old car passengers by driver age and severity for 2006

Driver Age	Fatal	Serious
Under 20	35	256
Under 25	48	397

But the government called for the need for further work in assessing how these casualties may be avoided in case of the introduction of any restrictions. The Transport Select Committee also called for the need for specific enforcement and publicity campaigns to target this particular age group.

### Anti-drink drive campaign to be launched

The UK's THINK! Road safety campaign will run ahead of Christmas and aims to convince all drivers, but with a particular focus on young male drivers aged 17-29 years, that a drink drive conviction has the potential to ruin their life by highlighting a mixture of the legal and personal consequences. This includes being caught and breathalysed by the police, a 12 month driving ban, a criminal record, a hefty fine, a lifestyle change (i.e. potential loss of job, relationships or car).

### UK drivers want BAC to be lowered

An online poll in the UK found that 68% of 2,010 British adults surveyed would support lowering the legal BAC limit from 0.8 to 0.5. The poll was carried out in July for More Than insurers

### New measures to tackled drink driving in Finland are urgently awaited

In Finland the government will introduce more stringent measures to tackle drink driving as part of its efforts to

intensify road safety measures announced at the start of November. A working group including the Minister of Transport Anu Vehviläinen, Minister of Justice Tuija Brax, Minister of the Interior Anne Holmlund and Minister of Health and Social Services Paula Risikko were reacting to steep rise in road traffic deaths which by the end of August totaled 252, 50 more than the same time last year.

### German Bundestag discusses Alcolocks

Combating drink driving was in the spotlight at the roundtable discussion in the German Parliament in November attended by Bundestag deputies, road safety experts, police officials. The event was organised by the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) and the Social Democratic group (SPD) in the framework of ETSC's "Safe & Sober" anti-drunk driving programme. In Germany alone, 603 victims died in alcohol related accidents in 2005. Although the number of drink driving accidents in Germany has been dropping in the past years, every ninth road victim still dies due to drink driving.

The experience of using Alcolocks in the EU and their possible introduction in Germany was discussed in depth at the round table of ETSC and SPD Transport Policy group. The meeting addressed the question of whether field trials for commercial drivers or recidivist offenders would be desirable and feasible here, as well as some other aspects of the drink driving problem and possible solutions to it. It was concluded that Alcolocks can have an immediate impact on reducing drink driving but more research needs to be done to tackle the problem of recidivism after de-installation of the device.

### ETSC Committed to Alcohol and Health Charter

ETSC has submitted on December 3rd 2007 its commitment to the European Alcohol and health Forum set up by the European Commission. There will be two strands to the commitment: the first is the organisation of 8 high profile 'Safe and Sober' Talks, held in different Member States, and including the participation of all key stakeholders. The Talks will aim at raising awareness across the EU of the dangers associated with drink driving. The second strand of the commitment, is to promote the use of 'alcolocks' at every ETSC event in order to raise further awareness of the issue of drink driving. This will be done in a practical and interactive way by using an 'alcolock' demonstration kit.

## Country Focus: Luxembourg

### New Drink Driving limit in line with EU

Luxembourg came in on first place under the ETSC Road Safety Performance Index (PIN)'s ranking evaluating progress towards the EU target of halving road deaths by 2010. Luxembourg has reduced annual road deaths by a staggering 48% between 2001 and 2006. Lucien Lux, the Luxembourg Minister of Transport underlined that: "this first place shows that we are on the right track and that we need to continue in this direction. Nevertheless, I am aware that it is not simply a matter of developing law, but changing mentalities. For this reason, I will not neglect in the next months to act on the basis of prevention in the mentality of road users to reduce the number of deaths on the road." The Ministry stated that "road safety is a permanent area of work and that we will never rest on our laurels."

Luxembourg used to have an above average level of EU death rates, but by 2005 moved up from the last to the second third of the league confirming that progress can be achieved quickly also by underperformers. Causes of the latest improvements in road safety in Luxembourg include a high level of political commitment; road safety has been declared as one of the top political priorities. Also raising compliance with traffic safety law has been a key contributor to the success and Luxembourg has tightened its police checks on speeding, drink driving and seat belts and overhauled its sanction regime.

A further positive development came when Luxembourg lowered its permitted blood alcohol concentration to 0.5g/l (instead of 0.8g/l) for most drivers, and 0.2g/l for novice and professional drivers. The new law was adopted on 12 July 2007 and came into force on 1st October 2007. The new law also extends police powers to allow for the on-the-spot withdrawal of the driving licence for the most serious drink driving offences. Sanctions have also been increased including both an increase in fines, withdrawal of points and prison sentences. Random checks are undertaken but must be ordered by the Public Prosecutor. Ahead of the introduction of the new legislation a public opinion survey was commissioned in March 2007 by the Ministry of Transport which found that a majority of those polled would support a lower BAC limit.

The first results following the introduction of the new limit show a positive trend. Of those people tested after the introduction of the new limit a large reduction was seen for the comparison of the month of October

between 2004 and 2007. The percentage who had a BAC between 0.8 and 1.2 g/l were down by 39% for those over 1.2 g/l there was a reduction of 17%. There was also a reduction in accidents for the comparison of the month of October between 2004 and 2007 especially the numbers of seriously injured were down 44%. The police increased their controls and 119 drivers had their licenses withdrawn immediately due to a level of 1.2 g/l. Although Luxembourg is small and it is difficult to draw conclusions from a small data set these first indicators show that the new legislation has already had an impact in reducing drink driving and collisions. The Ministry of Transport organised a press conference to present these initial findings to the public.

Luxembourg, alongside France and Portugal is the only country which has been able to reduce road deaths by over 8% yearly. The authority for new legislation on road safety rests with the Ministry of Transport which is working together with all governmental bodies and NGOs involved in road safety. Every year the Police draw up an enforcement calendar which sets monthly priorities for enforcement activities on different issues including alcohol.

Luxembourg has a penalty point system which was introduced in 2002. The level of drink driving in the country can also be seen in the review of penalty points. With 42.5% of the total points withdrawn in 2006, drink driving is the number one offence.

Media campaigns are set out in an annual calendar and carried out by the Ministry of Transport in partnership with the police and other partners; in particular NGOs, working in the field of road traffic safety. They also cover drink driving. Monthly campaigns are undertaken in conjunction with enforcement activities which are led by the police. Luxembourg also holds an annual conference to present the road accident data to the public.

Furthermore for the past 5 years Luxembourg has offered alternative transport running Night Bus service reaching rural areas to get people home and encouraging them not to drink and drive by giving them an alternative. This service has been co-funded by the Ministry of Transport and other sponsors since 2005.

The strengthening of the law relating to drink driving should have a further impact on driving down road traffic deaths in Luxembourg. The lower limits and tougher sanctions will play an instrumental part in defending its first position in next year's evaluation of progress towards the target.

## ETSC Interview

### ETSC interviews Noel Brett, CEO of the Road Safety Authority, Ireland



*ETSC: What have been the key developments over the past years in eliminating drink driving in Ireland?*

**Noel Brett:** The introduction of Mandatory Alcohol Testing (MAT) on 21st July 2006. There have been 92 fewer deaths in the first 12 months since the introduction of (MAT) compared

to the previous twelve month period. This represents a 22 % drop in road deaths. To date in 2007 there has been an 11% drop in road deaths compared to 2006. 2006 saw the lowest road fatality rate in over 41 years.

Secondly, tougher penalties for drink driving offences were introduced in March 2007. The disqualification periods for drink driving offences now ranges from 1 to 6 years depending on the level of alcohol detected, and whether it is a first or subsequent offence. This compares with the previous range of 3 months to 4 years. The offence of refusing to provide a sample of blood, urine or breath for evidential purposes now attracts an automatic disqualification of 4 years for a first offence and 6 years for a second or subsequent offence.

Thirdly, the whole process for applying to have a licence restored following a disqualification for drink driving has also been tightened. To enforce this new legislation the number of police officers employed full time in the Traffic Corps has increased from 500 to 1,200 since 2004.

Finally, this legislation has also been underlined by educational campaigns. In Ireland we have used a strategy of employing hard hitting mass media TV campaigns to change attitudes and behaviour towards drinking and driving. These campaigns have brought about a progressive cultural shift in this country against drinking and driving in terms of understanding its detrimental effects on road safety, support for more enforcement of more severe penalties and support for a lowering of the permitted BAC. Research findings undertaken between 2000 and 2006 show that there has been a 63% increase in the number of people saying drivers should Never Ever Drink and Drive. Moreover, 79% of the public said they wanted to see more road side breath testing of drink drivers (Lansdowne Market Research May 2006).

*ETSC: Is Ireland planning to begin collecting data on the share of deaths and injuries caused by drink driving?*

**Noel Brett:** This process has already started. The first study into the link between alcohol and road deaths was published last year and examined road deaths in 2003. Further studies are planned for analysing 2004, 05 and 06. In the future we aim to publish an annual review of blood alcohol levels from coroners' data.

*ETSC: What are the lessons learnt for other countries considering introducing these stricter measures?*

**Noel Brett:** Yes of course, Ireland has watched closely the countries which have made the biggest improvements in road safety and has adopted and adapted their successful interventions. Education is the key if you want to build a society that conforms with the law rather than just complies with the law. It also needs to begin well before the enforcement change is introduced. I would suggest that other countries in turn might like to look at Ireland regarding road safety communications to the public. Ireland's road safety campaigns have won 125 creative and effectiveness awards across the world and adverts have appeared on TV screens in Italy, Austria and Israel.

Our campaigns also reach our target audiences at the 'point of danger' where they are considering how they are going to get home be it in a pub washroom or leaving a rugby stadium. We also promote alternatives ways of getting home on public transport and using taxis.

The latest Christmas and New Year Drink Driving campaign that was just launched will be focusing on 'the morning after' dispelling myths about driving the next day following an evening out. The other clear message from the Police is that they do not want to catch people drink driving but stop people from drink driving altogether.

Following the introduction of Mandatory Alcohol Testing there was also a drop of deaths in the age group of young men. This can be related to a marked change in behaviour as young male drivers no longer take the risk of being stopped and checked at any time of day or night by the Traffic Police. This has also had a spin off effect in other areas of traffic law such as wearing seat belts.

*ETSC: What remains to be done?*

**Noel Brett:** The debate as to whether Ireland will lower its drink drive limit is over. The Irish Government has committed to lowering the limit before 2009. The question now is by how much should we lower our limit? An expert panel will deliver its recommendations in early 2008. Also in early 2008 the Government will consider legislation allowing the Police to breathe test every driver following a collision. A lowering of the legal BAC limit for novice drivers is also being considered as part of a new Graduated Licensing System.



European Transport Safety Council

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