European Transport Safety Council

NEWS RELEASE

Polish Presidency of the EU: Time to Start Work towards the 2020 Road Safety Target

***1st July 2011, Brussels* – "The Polish Presidency [1] should view road safety as a way to help the EU economy regain its competitiveness. Societal costs resulting from road deaths can be reduced by significant amounts, higher than the bailout package for Greece currently under discussion," declared Antonio Avenoso, ETSC[2] Executive Director.[3] "The Polish Presidency has the chance, but also the responsibility, to maintain the political momentum in reducing road deaths across the EU, particularly after the good reductions in the number of deaths recorded in 2009 and 2010," added Mr. Avenoso.**

The Polish Presidency will work together with the European Commission when the latter will overhaul the guidelines for the Trans-European Network for Transport (TEN-T). The European Commission announced in the 2010 "Road Safety Policy Orientations" that EU funding would only be granted to projects compliant with the Infrastructure Safety Directive and the Tunnel Safety Directive. "ETSC continues to support this initiative. Every year between 1.5 and 2 billion euro of EU funds are spent on building roads in the EU, it is the EU's duty to ensure that these roads are built safely." said Mr. Avenoso.[4]

The Polish Presidency must also liaise with the European Parliament from day one to ensure the adoption of the Cross Border Enforcement Directive is completed. Once adopted, this piece of legislation would bring significant road safety benefits. Mr. Avenoso added that an agreement is on the table, and "the adoption of the Directive would introduce equal treatment of non-resident and resident drivers and, most importantly, save lives on Europe's roads."

"Poland should also use its EU Presidency stint to increase the level of safety on its roads," declared Mr. Avenoso. Poland's figure of 102 road deaths per million inhabitants is more than three times larger than that of the best performing EU countries: Sweden (28) and the UK (31), and significantly above the EU average of 62 deaths per million inhabitants. High speeds and unprotected road users are two particular areas that need attention," said Mr. Avenoso.

Background:

In parallel with the expansion of its road infrastructure, Poland has mandated automated speed enforcement on the motorway network, a policy which is currently being applied. However, automated enforcement has been coupled with an increase of the maximum allowed speed limit to 140 km/h, making Poland the country with the highest speed limit in the EU. While the collision risks increased on the motorways, another factor of concern is that speed often migrates and higher speeds spill over onto adjacent rural roads. Moreover, Poland was one of the countries with the highest percentage of drivers breaking the speed limit on rural roads: 70% in 2008 before speed measurements were stopped.[5]

Unprotected road users are another cause for concern in Poland. The total share of these road user categories – pedestrians, cyclists and riders of powered two-wheelers - represents 49% of all road deaths registered in Poland between 2007 and 2009. There is an acute need for a further extension of the infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians. Enforcement, especially at pedestrian crossings, should be increased. The drivers' awareness of the dangers of not respecting the rules and the consequences for unprotected road users must also be raised.

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Notes to editors:

[1] Memorandum to the Polish EU Presidency
http://www.etsc.eu/documents/Polish_Presidency_ETSC.pdf

[2] ETSC is a Brussels-based independent non-profit making organisation dedicated to reducing the numbers of deaths and injuries in transport in Europe. The ETSC seeks to identify and promote research-based measures with a high safety potential. It brings together 45 national and international organisations concerned with transport safety from across Europe. www.etsc.eu

[3] The savings potential of reaching the target of reducing road deaths by 50% by 2020 compared with 2010 has been estimated at 180 billion euro. More information in ETSC (2011) 5th PIN Report "2010 Road Safety Target Outcome:100,000 fewer deaths since 2001" http://etsc.eu/documents/ETSC_2011_PIN_Report.PDF

[4] ETSC (2010) Response to EC Communication on Road Safety Policy Orientations 2011-2020 http://www.etsc.eu/documents/ETSC%20Response%20to%20EC%20Communication_%2022%20Sept%202010.pdf

[5] ETSC (2010) 4th Road Safety PIN Report, Road Safety Target in Sight - Making up for lost time, Chapter 3. http://www.etsc.eu/PIN-publications.php