European Transport Safety Council

NEWS RELEASE

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Cross Border Enforcement of Traffic Law: needs a Directive

The European Commission's Expert Group meets today to discuss traffic law enforcement and the preparation of a possible Directive to enhance cross border enforcement of traffic law. ETSC (1) welcomes this move as increasing evidence stemming from various Member States shows that drivers flout traffic laws when travelling abroad as they do not fear punishment (2). The Expert Group was set up following the publication of the EC Recommendation on enforcement in the field of road safety which focuses on drink driving, speeding and seat belt use (3). Representatives from Transport and Interior Ministries, as well as police forces will take stock of the current situation across the EU.

The efficient and effective follow up of cross-border offences is problematic, particularly in transit countries employing automatic speed enforcement systems (e.g. the Netherlands, France and Austria) (4). For instance, in France, approximately 25% of the violations were committed by vehicles registered outside France in the first four months of its operation in 2003. The European Commission and the Council of Ministers have also recognised the problems posed by cross-border enforcement (5).

Ellen Townsend, ETSC's Head of Policy, who will also be presenting ETSC's latest research at the Expert Group meeting today, states: *"There is a clear consensus that a common EU approach is needed to tackle non-resident offenders. This should now be developed by the European Commission in the form of a Directive."* There is no time to waste. Member States should start identifying enforcement coordination points, as required in the EC Recommendation, to report to the competent authority of the Member State in which the vehicle that has caused an office is registered. They should also collect data on non-resident offences and road deaths figures.

A public consultation on a Directive to enhance co-operation on the cross border enforcement of traffic offences is around the corner. In addition to cross border enforcement a Directive developed in this field, should also ensure that all Member States are aiming to achieve high standards in the areas of speeding, drink driving and seat belt use according to the best practice set out in the EC Recommendation on enforcement. The enforcement of these rules could help prevent 14,000 fatalities by 2010, according to Commission estimates.

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Notes to Editors:

(1) The European Transport Safety Council (ETSC), founded in 1993 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 34 national and international organisations in membership, leading transport safety experts from across Europe.

(2) "Traffic Law Enforcement Across the EU: An Overview" http://www.etsc.be/documents/Traffic_Law_Enforcement_in_the_EU_An_Overview_May_2006_ETSC.pdf

ETSC Fact Sheet: Cross Border Enforcement
http://www.etsc.be/documents/Fact_Sheet_CBE.pdf

(3) Commission Recommendation on enforcement in the field of road safety (2004) http://europa.eu.int/smartapi/cgi/sga_doc?smartapi!celexplus!prod!CELEXnumdoc&lg=en&numdoc=32004H0345

(4) Latest ETSC Enforcement Monitor 7 with Special Feature: Follow Up of traffic offences published on 20 July 2006, www.etsc.be

(5) The EC Recommendation on traffic law includes requirements on cross-border aspects. The EU Transport Ministers have included issues of cross-border enforcement both in the Verona Declaration on Road Safety.