NEWS RELEASE

Fate of EU motorway safety in hands of MEPs

***19 February 2008, Brussels* – Over 3,200 people are killed annually on EU motorways. While the number represents just 8% of the total number of road deaths, this is especially worrying against the background of striking disparities in motorway safety between different European countries, as demonstrated by the new Road Safety Performance Index (PIN) ranking[1] conducted by ETSC[2]. MEPs must adopt a strong position to improve this situation when they vote on a proposed Directive on road infrastructure safety management on the 26th of February.**

Motorways are the safest roads by design. While accounting for more than one quarter of all kilometers driven, they contribute only to 8% of to the total number of road deaths.

However, this high safety record is not at all universal in Europe. There is a six-fold difference between the worst and the best performers among the 19 surveyed countries. The motorways are safest in **Switzerland, Denmark,** the **Netherlands** and **Great Britain**, where less than two people are killed on average for every billion km driven. In **Sweden, France, Ireland, Germany** and **Finland** the risk of death is below the EU average of 4 deaths per billion vehicle-km. In **Austria, Norway, Belgium,** the **Czech Republic, Italy, Portugal** and **Spain,** death rates are above the EU average of 4 but below 7. On **Slovene** and **Hungarian** motorways, more than 8 people are killed for every billion km driven[3].

Although the number of deaths on EU motorways has been decreasing in 2001-2006 by 5% yearly, it has clearly tended to increase in **Greece, Sweden, Hungary** and **Slovenia**. On the contrary, **Switzerland, France** and **Austria** have achieved the biggest annual reductions in motorways deaths, between 10 and 15%[4].

The European Commission proposed a Directive on infrastructure safety in 2006. Its implementation would enhance motorway safety in the underperforming countries, requiring Member States to apply a set of time-proven instruments on the Trans-European Road Network. The Directive would also have a strong spill-over effect that would bring about important associated improvements in the safety management of the rest of the road network[5]. The European Parliament's Transport Committee will be voting on its report on the proposed Directive on 26 February 2008.

"The procedures laid out in the proposal are already applied at varying degrees in some Member States," said ETSC Executive Director Antonio Avenoso. *"However, in order to ensure minimum standards of safety on European motorways, these measures need to be extended to all EU countries, leaving them free to keep the existing procedures or to introduce their own."*

"Every year between 1.5 and 2 bln EUR are spent on major roads through various EU funds," said Enrico Grillo Pasquarelli, Director of Land Transport, DG TREN, European Commission. *"It's clearly a duty of the budgetary authority of the EU (Council and the European Parliament) to ensure this money is spent to build safe roads, and the proposed Directive will give the Commission the kind of benchmark it needs when assessing requests for funding coming from Member States".*

According to John Dawson, chairman of EuroRAP, the European Road Assessment Programme: *"Every few years, thousands of road sections across Europe see more casualties than a major rail crash, yet the cost of saving casualties represents a fraction of that spent on rail, air and factory safety, where laws are more stringent.."*

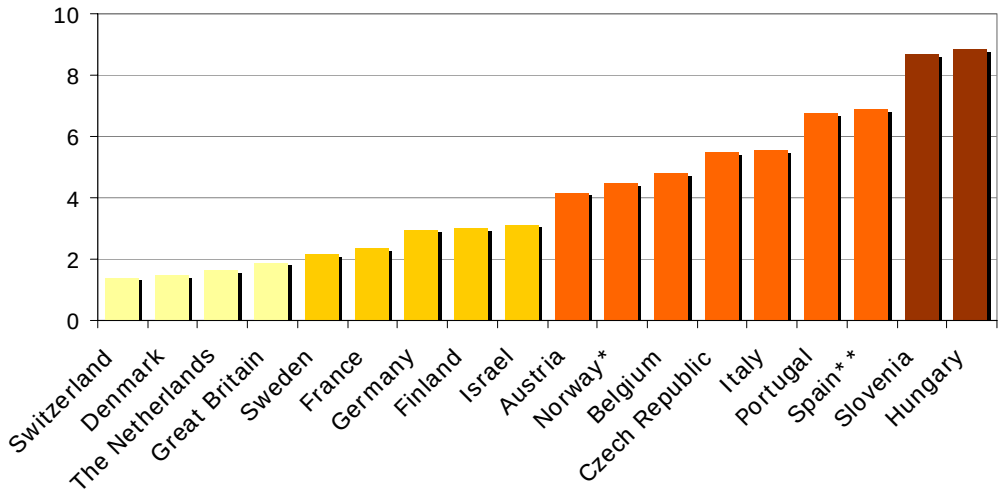
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Notes to Editors:

(1) The Road Safety Performance Index (PIN) Programme was launched in 2006 to compare country road safety performances. It currently includes 30 countries. www.etsc.be/PIN.

(2) The European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) is a Brussels-based non-profit making organisation dedicated to the reduction of transport crashes and casualties in Europe. www.etsc.be

(3) Number of deaths on motorways per billion vehicle-km in 2006



** Norway: 2005, ** Spain; Motorway and Autovia (express roads) together*
Rates for Finland, Ireland, Israel and Norway are based on few deaths per year and are therefore subject to wide fluctuation

(4) To download the complete study PIN Flash 8, the Background Tables with full data and the Note explaining the methodology used to calculate yearly average reduction, please go to www.etsc.be/PIN

(5) The EU project ROSEBUD estimated that the application of the four procedures to the Trans-European roads would reduce the number of deaths by more than 600 and injuries by 7,000 every year. ROSEBUD also estimated that 400 lives per year could be saved if the safety management was applied to motorways only, and 1,300 if applied to motorways and main roads.
http://ec.europa.eu/transport/roadsafety/infrastructure/safety_mgnt_en.htm