NEWS RELEASE

Portugal aims to halve road deaths ahead of EU Deadline

Curbing speed is key to achieving goal

28 November 2007, Lisbon **– The impressive road safety successes and the challenges ahead were discussed today at the Road Safety PIN[(1)] Talk in Lisbon, organised by the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC)[(2)] and the Portuguese Road Safety Authority (ANSR)[(3)]. Encouraged by support of the public and the good results so far, the Portuguese government has recently raised the bar and reset its aim to reach the target of halving road deaths by 2009, a year ahead of the EU deadline. The EU aims to half road deaths by 2010 and each country must make efforts to contribute to this target.**

Portugal has seen a spectacular decrease in the number of road fatalities over the past decade: from over 271 per million population in 1995 down to 91 per million in 2006. Since 1985 the total number of road victims has decreased by 50%, against a fourfold increase in traffic volume. The biggest reduction was registered in 2006 when the number of road fatalities was reduced by 22.3%, from 1,247 to 969. This outstanding progress in 2006 catapulted Portugal into the three best performing EU countries in terms of road deaths reduction since 2001, along with Luxembourg and France.[(4)]

This success can be largely attributed to its National Road Safety Plan. Launched in March 2003 it became a first programme in Portugal with quantitative long-term targets, including fighting speed and drink driving, improving infrastructure, enhancing safety for pedestrians and two-wheelers. Many of the stated priorities, notably in the infrastructure area, have been a resounding success. Over 1,100 km of motorways have been built in the past six years and a host of low-cost traffic calming measures have been applied on interurban roads in small villages. As a result, the number of high-risk sites have been reduced by some 80%, and the number of related deaths was down by over 90% between 1998 and 2006.

However, progress in other areas, notably in reducing speed, is still needed. According to the latest available data, the mean speed increased by 2.5% on motorways and by some 10% on rural roads between 2002 and 2004. The only reduction (6.3%) was registered on urban roads. Between 70% and 80% of drivers exceed the posted speed limits on motorways and country roads, and 50% of motorists continue to speed on urban roads[(5)]. This explains the high number of pedestrian deaths – 137 in 2006, or about 16% of the total road deaths, above the EU-15 average of 14%[(6)]. The level of the elderly road deaths is also unacceptably high, with 429 road deaths per million population[(7)].

"*In Portugal, people are well informed about road safety and levels of injuries and deaths,"* Paulo Marques, Director of the Portuguese National Road Safety Authority, said. "*The public, much as they are reluctant to change their own behaviour in traffic, want the government to do more about road safety and will accept even more drastic measures. Consequently a National Road Safety Strategy is being developed now which will set new, even more ambitious targets for 2008-2015."*

Richard Allsop from University College London, said: *"This progress in Portugal is encouraging for road safety workers all over Europe. It shows that a good mix of road building and traffic calming can make a real difference. The next challenge is for drivers in Portugal – to learn to be proud to drive that bit less fast and less close to the car in front."*

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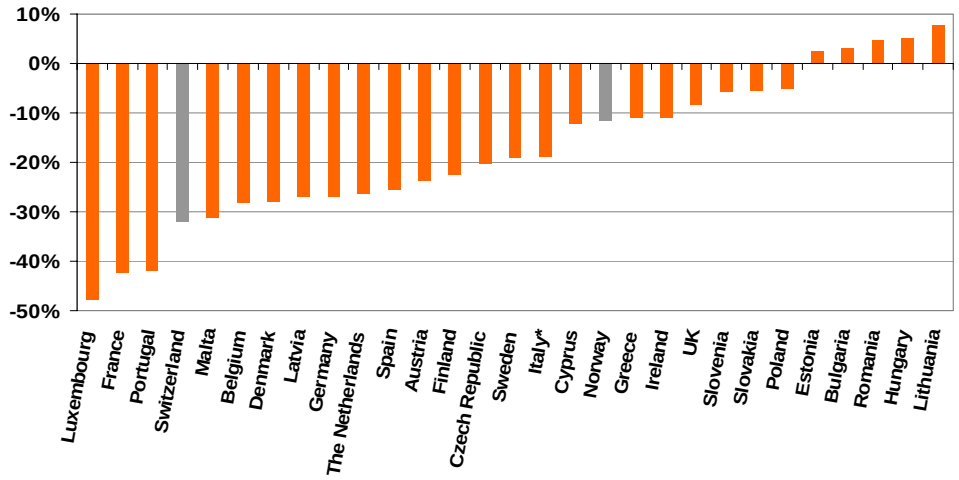
Notes to Editors:

(1) **The Road Safety Performance Index (PIN) Programme** was launched in June 2006 to compare road safety performances of 27 European countries. It currently includes 30 countries. www.etsc.be/PIN.php

(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 38 national and international organisations concerned with transport safety from across Europe. www.etsc.be.

(3) **Road Safety National Authority – ANSR (Autoridade Nacional de Segurança Rodoviária)** is a Portuguese public entity within the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in charge of road safety coordination and the application of Road Penalty Law." http://www.ansr.pt/

(4) Percentage changes in road deaths between 2001 and 2006. Source: CARE and national data (*Italy 2005)



(5) ETSC 2006. Traffic Law Enforcement Across the EU: An Overview
www.etsc.be/documents/Traffic_Law_Enforcement_in_the_EU_An_Overview_May_2006_ETSC.pdf

(6) Country report on road safety performance – Portugal, Joint OECD/ECMT Transport Research Centre

(7) A study of the European Network for Safety among Elderly (EUNESE) and the Center for Research and Prevention of Injuries-CEREPRI, 2007. www.euroipn.org/stats_portal/