

## NEWS RELEASE

### Finland one of Europe's frontrunners in combating drink driving

**13 June 2007, Helsinki** - Twenty distinguished road safety experts gathered today in Helsinki to discuss strategies to reduce alcohol misuse in road transport at the first "Safe and Sober" Talk held in Finland. The event was organised by the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC)<sup>(1)</sup> and the Finnish Traffic Safety Committee of Insurance Companies (VALT) in the framework of ETSC's "Safe & Sober" drink driving programme. The "Safe & Sober" campaign is run by ETSC in partnership with VOLVO.

The debate showed that, in overall terms, Finland shows one of the best non-drink-driving performances compared to other EU states. In 2006, only 0.15% of drivers were driving under the influence of alcohol (i.e. with an illegal Blood Alcohol Content (BAC)), compared to an estimated 2% in the EU. Approximately 50% of drivers are breath tested on alcohol annually, which is one of the highest numbers in Europe. Nonetheless alcohol is a factor in approximately 25% of all fatal motor vehicle accidents, according to VALT.

Although being one of Europe's frontrunners in terms of road safety, Finland could do more to prevent alcohol related accidents. *"The situation won't change without intensified enforcement and tougher legislation. Equipping cars with alcohol interlocks and adopting a lower BAC limit could form part of the solution"*, Esa Rätty, Road Safety Researcher at VALT pointed out.

The objective of the Talk and the "Safe & Sober" campaign is to raise awareness amongst policy makers, the private sector as well as some key opinion leaders for a systematic approach to reduce drink driving, especially in commercial transport. The campaign will identify and promote Best Practice from the health and transport sectors alike. It will include measures relating to education (e.g. effective information campaigns), enforcement (e.g. random breath testing) and engineering (e.g. alcohol interlocks).

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Note to Editors:

(1) 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. ETSC seeks to identify and promote effective measures on the basis of international scientific research and best practice. It brings together 37 organisations concerned with transport safety from across Europe.