

NEWS RELEASE

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"Road Safety is a Challenge and Opportunity for Slovakia," **says independent European road safety voice ETSC**

Under the leadership of the Slovak Ministry of Transport, Posts and Telecommunications and the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC)⁽¹⁾, 25 distinguished road safety experts and stakeholders gathered in Bratislava today for a high-level debate on improving road safety in the Slovak Republic. This event was kindly supported by Toyota Slovakia.

Slovakia faces an enormous challenge if the country is to reach the EU target of a 50% reduction in road deaths by 2010 at the national level. In 2005, 560 people died on Slovak roads. With this toll, Slovakia ranks 15 among European countries on the basis of road deaths per population. During the first half of the European road safety programme, Slovakia reduced its yearly death toll by 9%, while some other countries achieved reductions of over 25% over the same 4-year period. Slovakia achieved however better progress than the other three countries of the Visegrad group⁽²⁾.

At a discussion held today in the framework of the Road Safety Performance Index (PIN)⁽³⁾ in Bratislava, Mr Krak, General Director of the Transport Policy Division at the Slovak Ministry of Transport, said: *"I believe today's forum has enriched our knowledge with new and useful information. It has also led to new international contacts which will help us in our effort to increase road safety in Slovakia."*

"All countries can achieve fast progress, whatever their starting point," said Franziska Achterberg, PIN Programme Director, citing the examples of France and Belgium. In 2001, both countries ranked behind Slovakia but have achieved better progress since. *"European experiences show that improving compliance with safety legislation in the areas of speed, drink driving and seat belt use is key to fast progress in road safety. The best way to reach this is a combination of police checks and awareness raising, as recommended by the European Commission."*⁽⁴⁾

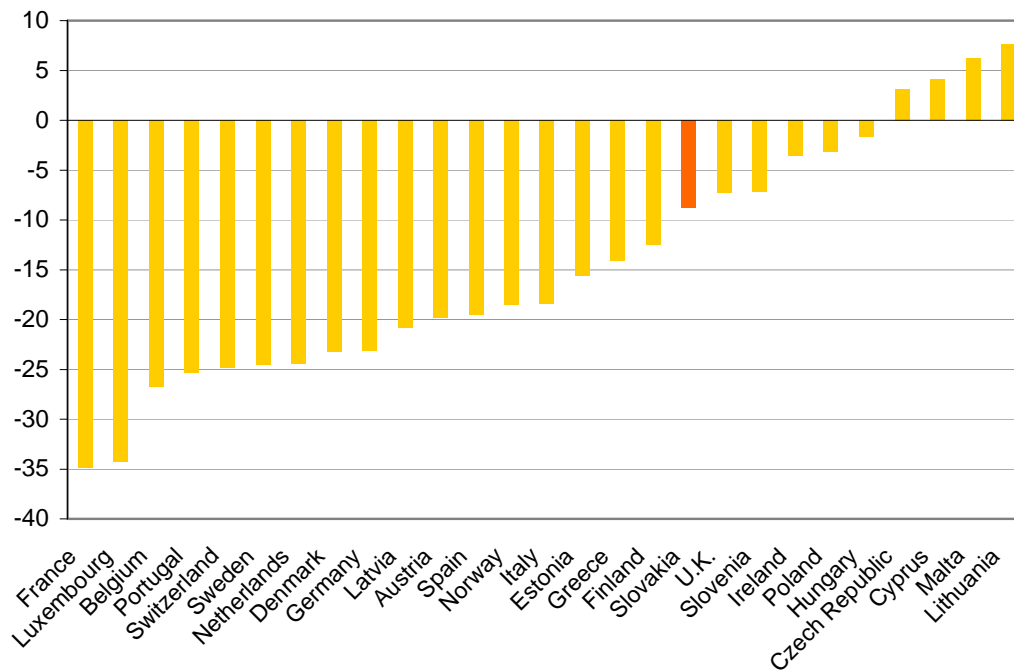
Safety-related data such as the level of seat belt use or driving speeds, are an important source of information for decision-makers. In Slovakia, however, such data are hardly available. *"Comparable performance indicators can help decision-makers to recognise achievement and identify shortcomings in particular areas of road safety,"* said Prof. Richard Allsop, Chairman of the PIN Programme. *"It would therefore be desirable if this type of data was also collected in Slovakia."*

Today's debate showed that, in overall terms, road safety is improving in the Slovak Republic. Constructive action is being taken in all the relevant areas: infrastructure, behaviour, vehicle. But the meeting has also shown that all the institutions vested with responsibility in Slovakia must do more and do it better in order to achieve the ambitious common EU objective. *"There is a lot of room for further improvement. Better co-operation among all the actors and better co-ordination of their activities will be key to success,"* concluded Štefan Pristaš, Head of the Road Safety Department at the Ministry of Transport, Posts and Telecommunications.

Notes 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 36 organisations concerned with transport safety from across Europe.

(2) Development in road deaths 2001-2005 (in %). Source: CARE and national data



(3) The Road Safety Performance Index (PIN) was set up in June 2006 to compare Member States' performance in all areas of road safety. It receives financial support from Swedish Road Administration and Toyota Motor Europe. See www.etsc.be/PIN.

(4) Commission Recommendation (2004/345/EC) on enforcement in the field of road safety

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