European Transport Safety Council

NEWS RELEASE

ETSC urges for zero tolerance to alcohol on EU roads

24 April 2012, Brussels **– "Drink driving unfortunately remains one of the three main killers on our roads. We must all take action to reduce this unacceptable behaviour which claims so many lives every year," said Antonio Avenoso, ETSC[1] executive Director during today's event dedicated to tackling drink driving. Siim Kallas, European Commission Vice-President responsible for Transport, delivered the keynote address at the conference. "It is unacceptable for 85 people to die every day on Europe's roads. Alcohol-impaired road users are still involved in about a quarter of all fatal crashes in Europe. This is a very worrying situation. But if we work together to raise awareness, to enforce the rules better and to change people's driving habits, then we can truly make a difference in bringing down the number of road deaths," said Mr. Kallas.**

At the event ETSC launched its latest publication which tracks national progress in fighting drink driving and outlines good practice examples from four European countries. "there has been progress in reducing the number of deaths attributed to drink driving, but the number of lives lost to drink driving is still unacceptably high," said Professor Richard Allsop, ETSC Board Member. "Approximately 2% of the total number of kilometres driven in the EU are driven with an illegal level of blood alcohol content. On the other hand, in 2010 11% of all road deaths were directly attributed to drink driving and the European Commission estimates that as many as 25% of all road deaths across the EU are alcohol related. By doing the maths, even with a more conservative assumption, ETSC estimates that 6500 deaths would have been prevented in 2010 if all drivers had obeyed the national regulations on drink driving," said Prof. Allsop.

Overall, EU member states have shown good progress in fighting drink driving, according as the number of deaths attributed to drink driving dropped at a higher pace than the corresponding number of other road deaths.[2] Ireland, Slovakia, Latvia, Bulgaria and Hungary top this ranking: they performed considerably better in reducing drink driving-related deaths than other road deaths. Italy, Cyprus and Portugal have to increase their efforts to tackle drink driving, as the number of drink driving-related road deaths has increased between 2001 and 2010.

Tackling drink driving through the use of alcohol interlocks, police enforcement and rehabilitation schemes were at the top of the agenda of yesterday's seminar. Speaking of enforcement, Pasi Kemppainen, President of TISPOL the European Traffic Police Network, said "We believe everyone stopped by police should have an alcohol and drug test. Also, every driver involved in a collision should be tested. Legislation should allow random testing, and the police's own road safety strategy should spell this out". Marita Löytty

presented the Finnish alcohol interlock programme, the first EU country to mandate the devices are used in school and day-care transport. Inger Rasmussen introduced the audience to the rehabilitation schemes drivers in the Danish Midtjylland region have to undertake following a drink driving offence.

Background:

The 'Saving Lives Until 2020: Acting Together to Tackle Drink Driving' conference is part of ETSC's Drink Driving Policy Network[3], a two-year programme run by ETSC with the financial support of DIAGEO.[4]

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[1] ETSC is a Brussels-based independent non-profit making organisation dedicated to reducing the numbers of deaths and injuries in transport in Europe. The ETSC seeks to identify and promote research-based measures with a high safety potential. It brings together 45 national and international organisations concerned with transport safety from across Europe. www.etsc.eu

[2] The full report can be found here:
http://www.etsc.eu/documents/Drink_Driving_Towards_Zero_Tolerance.pdf

[3] The aim of the Drink Driving Policy Network is to contribute to reducing alcohol-related road deaths and injuries through the identification and promotion of best practice in both policy and advocacy. This focus is aligned with the EU Alcohol Strategy to reduce injuries and deaths from alcohol-related road traffic accidents.

[4] Beverage alcohol producer DIAGEO provides financial support for ETSC's Drink Driving Policy Network and today's event. Diageo is committed to playing a part in changing attitudes and behaviours towards drinking and driving.