NEWS RELEASE

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Drink driving – good progress in some countries, but others hold Europe back

17 April 2007, Brussels – A new study published today under ETSC's Road Safety Performance Index (PIN)[1] indicates that in Europe, improvements in drink driving contribute their share to enhancing road safety. However, in nine countries, insufficient progress on reducing drink driving deaths has slowed down overall improvement over the last decade.

The fourth country ranking under the Road Safety Performance Index (PIN) identifies three groups of countries. In a first group of nine countries, reductions in deaths from drink driving crashes are greater than reductions in deaths from other crashes. The biggest difference was found in the Czech Republic where deaths from alcohol-related accidents dropped more than 11% per year faster than other road deaths. In Germany, drink driving deaths dropped more than 6% per year faster than other road deaths, and in Poland almost 5% per year faster. Slovakia, the Netherlands, Latvia, Austria, France and Greece also follow this positive trend[2].

In a second group of countries, including Spain, Hungary, Slovenia, Finland, Great Britain, Estonia, Denmark, Switzerland and Lithuania, drink driving related traffic deaths dropped more slowly than deaths not related to drink driving. In Hungary, Finland, Spain and Great Britain, there has even been an increase in drink driving deaths during the period of 1996-98 to 2005. In this group, the lack of improvement on drink driving deaths has hampered overall progress in reducing road deaths.

The report also points to the alarming lack of knowledge surrounding the issue of drink driving. It shows that another seven out of 27 countries are not able to produce the data needed to evaluate the development in the drink driving situation over time[3]. It shows moreover that actual numbers of drink driving deaths are considerably higher than reflected in reports from police and medical staff.

The report calls for stricter enforcement of legal blood alcohol limits, coupled with awareness raising campaigns. "There is a trend to lowering BAC limits in European countries," says Jörg Beckmann, ETSC Executive Director. "However, the enforcement of these limits is another issue. Today, alcohol checks are more of an exception than a rule, and too few countries apply the strategies that have proven to work."[4]

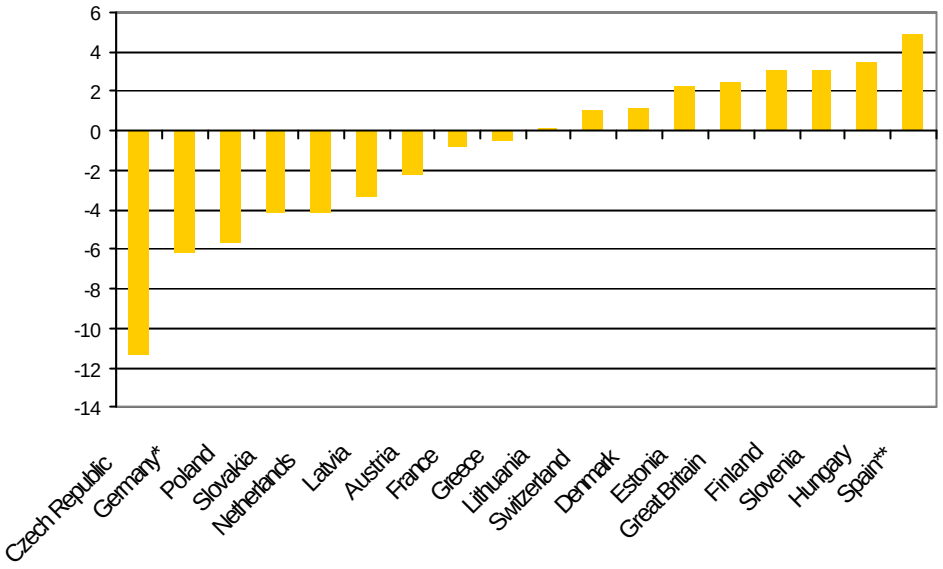
The ETSC [5] is running two projects to address this important issue. The "Safe and Sober" Campaign aims to raise awareness for reducing alcohol misuse in commercial road transport. The "Drink Driving Policy Network" addresses the issue of high-BAC repeat offenders and young and novice drivers.

The report can be found on ETSC's website under www.etsc.be/PIN. For more information please contact: ETSC Head of Communications, Franziska Achterberg at franziska.achterberg@etsc.be tel. +32 2 230 4106.

Notes to Editors:

(1) The Road Safety Performance Index (PIN) compares performance in road safety of 27 European countries. See www.etsc.be/PIN.

(2) Yearly percentage change in drink driving deaths relative to other road deaths between 1996-1998 and 2005. Source: National data



* Yearly percentage change in drivers involved in fatal drink driving crashes relative to drivers involved in other fatal crashes (Germany)
** Yearly percentage change in driver deaths from drink driving crashes relative to driver deaths from other crashes (Spain)

(3) This group includes Belgium, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Norway, Portugal and Sweden. For Cyprus and Luxembourg the numbers of drink driving deaths are available for the relevant years but cannot be used in this ranking because the numbers are too small, and therefore too variable, for the percentage changes to be estimated reliably.

(4) ETSC (2007) Traffic Enforcement in the EU – Time for a Directive. See www.etsc.be/documents/ETS%20001-07.pdf

(5) 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 37 national and international organisations concerned with transport safety from across Europe. See www.etsc.be.