Action on reducing speed is needed in Finland

6 March 2008, Helsinki **– The number of road deaths in Finland decreased by 22.4% in 2001-2006, in line with the EU average. However, this falls short of both the national and EU road safety targets. The country's road safety performance and the challenges ahead were discussed today at the Road Safety PIN[(1)] Talk in Helsinki, organised by the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC)[(2)], the Traffic Safety Committee of the Finnish Motor Insurers' Centre (VALT)[(3)] and the Central Organisation for Traffic Safety (Liikenneturva)[(4)].**

With the adoption of its 2006 resolution[(5)], the Finnish Government confirmed its main national road safety goal of reducing the number of road deaths to 250 by 2010, with an interim target of less than 290 deaths in 2007. In the long term a much more ambitious aim to reduce annual road deaths to less than 100 by 2025 has been set. However, with 336 deaths occurring on Finnish roads in 2006, it has become evident that the country is still far from reaching its 2010 national goal.

Similarly, Finland is among the underperformers when it comes to the EU target of halving road deaths in the period 2001-2010, which means achieving 200 annual deaths in Finland by 2010. In order to achieve this Finland should have been eradicating road deaths at the rate of 7.4% per year over the past five years, while the actual yearly rate of reduction has averaged just under 5%[(6)].

With the number of speed-related accidents rising from 33% to 45% in the past three years, speed remains the single biggest contributor to road death and injury in Finland. This comes as no surprise given that average speeds on Finnish rural roads and motorways have decreased by as little as 1.1% - 1.4% over 1999-2006[(7)].

Speeding is closely related to other serious road safety offences, especially drink driving. Half of fatal speeding accidents in Finland are alcohol-related, according to Esa Räty from the Finnish Motor Insurers' Centre (VALT). This is no surprise given that drink driving deaths in Finland have actually grown by 3% over the past decade, according to the PIN Annual Report.

"Speeding is a problem particularly in urban areas," said Esa Räty. *"Over a third (39%) of fatal accidents in urban areas are related to speeding, while in rural areas the proportion is 35%. Furthermore, the proportion of accidents due to excessive speeding (of 30 km/h or more) is 28% in urban areas, which is almost twice as high as 16% in rural areas."*

Richard Allsop, Professor at University College London and Chairman of the PIN programme, said: *"Speed is a key policy area for boosting improvements in road safety. The Finnish Government is fully conscious of its importance as confirmed by the Government's 2006-2010 Road Safety Plan containing several measures for tackling speed offences. The next step is to enforce those measures effectively".*

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Notes to Editors:

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

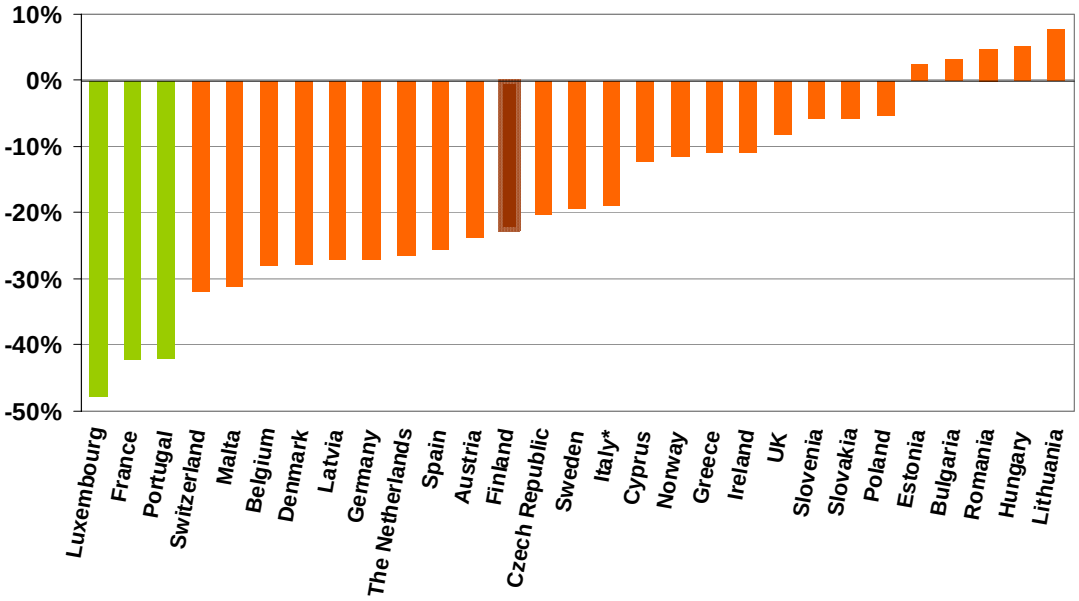
(2) **The European Transport Safety Council (ETSC)** is a Brussels-based independent non-profit making organisation dedicated to the reduction of the number and severity of transport crashes in Europe. The ETSC seeks to identify and promote research-based measures with a high safety potential. It brings together 39 national and international organisations concerned with transport safety from across Europe. www.etsc.be

(3) **The Traffic Safety Committee of the Finnish Motor Insurers' Centre (VALT)** steers the road safety work of The Finnish Motor Insurers' Centre (FMIC). The Investigation of Road and Cross-country Traffic Accidents is maintained and organised by FMIC / VALT.

(4) **The Central Organisation for Traffic Safety (Liikenneturva)** operates under the guidance of the Ministry of Transport and Communications and its mission is to promote the safety of road traffic by influencing people's attitudes and traffic behaviour.

(5) **Government resolution on improving road safety**, 9 March 2006.

(6) Percentage changes in road deaths between 2001 and 2006. Source: CARE and national data. **PIN Flash 6**. http://www.etsc.be/documents/PIN%20Flash%206.pdf
* Italy: 2005



(7) **PIN Annual Report** (p.25). www.etsc.be/documents/PIN_Report.pdf