Dear Herman De Croo (ETSC)
Dear Mr. Bergeron (The Brewers of Europe)
Dear Mr. Casto Lopez (COM, DG MOVE)

Dear colleges of Parliament,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to co-host this dinner debate with the European Transport Safety Council and to welcome you in the European Parliament not only as MEP but also as board member of ETSC

First I would like to use the opportunity to thank the representatives of the ETSC for the long-standing cooperation.
The ETSC's evidence-based inputs to road safety policy continue to be a reliable source of information for me and my colleagues.
Informed decision-making in the European Parliament needs to be based on such well-founded facts and scientific groundwork.

The ETSC's approach to identify and promote research-based measures with a high safety potential is also evident in the "Sober Mobility across Road Transport" - in short, SMART - project, which the ETSC launched earlier this year.

In this context, I regret the reduction of EU subsidies for research purposes in the field of road safety, but I welcome the contribution of organisations like the ETSC and The Brewers of Europe, which supports the SMART project financially.

I am pleased to co-host one of the SMART project's first activities, tonight's dinner debate on 'Tackling Drink-Driving for Safer Workplaces.'

The link between drink-driving and the workplace made by tonight's event highlights that harmful and hazardous alcohol

consumption impacts on both driving and working capacity - in both cases with potentially grave consequences.

This event is an excellent opportunity to bring key actors together and to hear about the experiences of companies and public authorities.

The SMART project will run until 2016.

Within these three years, ETSC plans a number of conferences and national events on drink-driving which will present ample opportunity to present research results, case studies and data, and to convene stakeholders.

Just as we within the ETSC, the European Union is committed to reducing the numbers of injuries and deaths in transport in Europe.

Drink-driving and driving under the influence of medication or drugs is among the main causes of road accidents in the EU.

It is estimated that around 35% of driver deaths are related to drink-driving.

In the age group from 16 to 25 years, alcohol-related crashes are indeed the leading cause of death.

Despite European and national policies, the level of harm - especially among young people - on roads and at workplaces is still unacceptably high in all Member States.

EU policy complements national actions in the field of public health.

Therefore it does not consist of specific legislative proposals.

It rather adds value by spelling out a general coordinated strategy across Member States and by offering all stakeholders a European forum to address shared problems and to identify best-practice approaches.

The 'EU Strategy to Support Member States in Reducing Alcohol-Related Harm' has existed since 2006.

Its aims include, amongst others, both to reduce injuries and deaths from alcohol-related road traffic accidents and to reduce negative impacts on the workplace caused by harmful alcohol consumption.

In order to improve safety at work and on the road, we need to develop effective policies to tackle alcohol-related harm.

In the case of workplace safety, contributions by businesses and the social partners are important and valuable.

An important topic for tonight's discussions is therefore the role of workplace-based initiatives with the aim of promoting health.

We may discuss experiences with a zero-tolerance policy towards drunk-driving at the workplace.

In my report on European road safety 2011-2020 I propose to the Commission and the Member States to encourage businesses to draw up road safety plans as well as strategies to reduce the number of accidents suffered by workers on the way to and from work.

I also recommend that all new types of commercial passenger and goods transport vehicles should be fitted with so-called alcolocks.

In the future it may be possible to equip machines at workplaces with such alcolocks as well so that they do not start when the operator is drunk.

In my report, I furthermore advise harmonising blood alcohol limits across all Member States, including a 0.0 per mil limit for newly qualified drivers and professional drivers.

Finally, in the context of driver training, attention should be paid to the main causes of

road deaths and serious injuries, thus including driving while drunk or under the influence of drugs or certain medication.

These are some of my ideas about how to combat drink-driving and to prevent road deaths and serious injuries, and I look forward to discussing them with you.

The topic of tonight's dinner debate is situated at the thematic intersection of my activities as vice-chair of the Transport Committee and as substitute member of the Committee for Employment and Social Affairs.

Having been a Member of European Parliament since 1991, road safety has always been one of my main concerns.

Hence, I am looking forward to hearing the speakers' proposals for policies to tackle drink-driving and to improve safety at work and on the road.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to conclude by wishing you a successful launch event for the SMART project, an insightful discussion and an enjoyable dinner.

Thank you very much.