

NEWS RELEASE
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Tackling the three main killers on the roads: countries progress – but too slowly

5 May 2010 - Today ETSC⁽¹⁾ has launched its 16th Road Safety PIN⁽²⁾ Flash⁽³⁾ measuring EU countries' progress since 2001 in tackling excessive speed, drink driving and non-use of seat belts which remain the three main killers on EU roads. This update comes at a crucial time when the EU is discussing its priorities for the forthcoming EU Road Safety Action Programme for the next ten years.

Data from the countries that monitor mean driving speeds in free-flowing traffic show that drivers have slowed down appreciably since 2001. Best progress has been made on motorways, where 'only' up to 30% of drivers now exceed the speed limit. Unfortunately, speed violations are still up to 70% on rural roads and as many as 80% on urban roads.

France is the only country to have achieved considerable reductions in mean speeds on all types of roads. Average speeds have been cut by 10 km/h (or 11.6%) between 2001 and 2009. **Great Britain** and **Austria** recorded reductions in mean speeds on both urban roads and motorways. Key factors in achieving progress were automated speed enforcement schemes based on safety cameras and stricter sanctions like penalty point systems and higher fines. **Germany, Greece, Malta, Italy, Portugal** and **Slovakia** do not monitor mean speeds on their roads which deprives them of important feedback on the effectiveness of their actions.

More than 2,200 road deaths could be prevented each year if average driving speeds dropped by only 1 km/h on all roads across the EU, according to ETSC estimates⁽⁴⁾. The EU should adopt the Cross Border Enforcement Directive to address speeding in the EU without delay.

Deaths attributed to drink driving have decreased somewhat faster than other road deaths since 2001 in the EU – by about 5.8% against 4.2% on average each year. However, a massive underreporting distorts the real picture: it is estimated that alcohol related deaths make up to 25% of all road deaths⁽⁵⁾ against 11.5% according to official statistics.

The EU should promote consistent and visible enforcement as powerful deterrents to drink driving and adopt a 0.2g/l BAC limit for commercial and novice drivers. However, despite an increase in a number of countries, alcohol checks are still too rare an experience for most drivers⁽⁶⁾. The EU should support the introduction of alcolocks, in rehabilitation programmes and for fleet drivers; this could further reduce drink driving and complement zero tolerance of drink driving by all drivers as represented by roadside police checks.

Although obligatory in all Member States, seat belt use in light vehicles in the EU is estimated to be only 88% for front seats and as low as 72% for rear seats. Some progress has been made, but wearing rates are still disturbingly low in many Eastern and Southern European countries. **France, Germany, Sweden** the **UK** and the **Netherlands** have the highest seat belt wearing rates, 95% and higher, for drivers and front seat passengers, while in **Hungary, Slovakia, Greece** and **Italy** rates are below 80%⁽⁷⁾. For rear seat passengers the disparities between countries are much bigger: from over 80% in **Germany, Finland, UK, France, Spain** and the **Netherlands**, all the way down to under 30% in **Cyprus, Greece, Malta** and **Latvia**⁽⁸⁾.

Seat belt reminders are a powerful tool in bringing up the rate of seat belts use. Across the EU, an estimated 12,400 occupants of light vehicles survived serious crashes in 2009 because they wore a seat belt. Another 2,500 deaths could have been prevented if 99% of occupants had been wearing a seat belt, a rate that could be reached with seat belt reminders. The EU should support the extension of seat belt reminders to all seats without delay⁽⁹⁾.

"It is encouraging to see where good progress has been made, and disappointing when opportunities are missed. Despite continual safety warnings, I am deeply concerned that we are still catching thousands of people every year who are not wearing a seatbelt," said TISPOL President Javier Sanchez-Ferragut.

"The life-saving potential of comparatively simple and known measures in these key areas of road safety is huge," said ETSC Executive Director Antonio Avenoso. *"The EU should use the Directive on Cross Border Enforcement within the 4th European Road Safety Action Programme to urge Member States to adopt new legislative measures to cut down speeding, drink driving and non-use of seat belts radically. They should also monitor indicators of these behaviours."*

The report and detailed figures for each country are available under www.etsc.eu/PIN-publications.php. For further enquiries please contact PIN Programme Manager Graziella Jost, graziella.jost@etsc.eu, tel. +32 (0)2 230.41.06, mob. +32(0)4.98.51.65.62.

Notes to Editors:

(1) 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 41 national and international organisations concerned with transport safety from across Europe. www.etsc.eu

(2) The Road Safety Performance Index (PIN) Programme was launched in June 2006 to compare country road safety performances. It currently includes the 27 countries of the EU, as well as Israel, Norway and Switzerland. www.etsc.eu/PIN.

(3) The PIN Flash and Background Tables are available at www.etsc.eu/PIN-publications.php

(4) Estimates using Nilsson's "Power Model" showing the exponential relationship between increases in speed and the probability of collisions and their severity. While the risk linked to speed varies across road types, a sound rule of thumb is that, on average, 1% reduction in the mean speed of traffic leads to a 4% reduction in fatal collisions. (Aarts and van Schagen, based on Nilsson's "Power Model").

(5) European Road Safety Observatory
http://ec.europa.eu/transport/wcm/road_safety/erso/knowledge/Content/05_alcohol/alcohol.htm

(6) See Table 8. Numbers of roadside alcohol breath tests (per 1,000 inhabitants) in the Background Tables.

(7) Fig. 9. Seat belt wearing rates on front seats of light vehicles in 2009, with 2005 for comparison.

(8) Fig. 10. Seat belt wearing rates on rear seats of light vehicles in 2009, with 2005 for comparison.

(9) Seat Belt Reminders will be compulsory for the driver seat from 1st of January 2011.